

Dr. Robert E. Speer's Address to the Young Men of India.¹

The world is moving. We no longer find men going about with a free and satisfied air in life. The slow easy-going world is no more. Everybody realizes that something is wrong. They are asking, Why is it that there is so much misery and sickness and injustice? Why is there so much wrong and dissatisfaction? What is the matter? And, going deeper still, What is the remedy? Present day doctors disagree; some give one, and others a different cause for all the evil. We hear it said that the whole trouble is an economic maladjustment. If the economic wrongs can be corrected and the economic injustices adjusted, the evil will be removed. We hear this explanation very frequently in the United States. We are told that the whole difficulty is purely economic. If only every man can have a fair share of food and clothing this great social problem will be solved. We hear this remedy in India too. For the last few weeks I have been travelling up and down this interesting and picturesque country of yours, from Colombo to the Punjab. We are told that the masses do not have enough food; this fact we know to be an economic issue. But we also know that there is an abundance of wealth in India. Yes, it is answered, but the trouble is that it is not equally divided. Then we are told that the conditions are not favourable for an equitable distribution. But is this the answer?

Yes, the answer is partly right. But does it really go to

¹ During his recent visit to India Dr. Robert E. Speer, a distinguished graduate of Princeton University, spoke to the students of Ewing Christian College Allahabad. Prof. R. H. Hannum B.A., took notes of the address which appeared in the November issue of the Ewing Christian College magazine. With the permission of the Editor of the Magazine, Prof. N. C. Mukerji M.A., and with thanks to Prof. Hannum for liberty to condense his notes here and there, this message is sent forth. Dr. Speer needs no introduction to the young men of America. He has been one of their honoured and beloved leaders in the things that are good and noble and true. Young men crowd the largest Halls to hear him. This message, the substance of one of his addresses to the young men of India, is commended to their thoughtful reading.

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the bottom of the trouble? Are most of the evils in the United States and in India mainly economic? Let us try this remedy and see how far it goes. Let me ask you, is the man of wealth always a good man? Is it not true that some of the greatest rascals are men who have no economic needs? Moreover we can test this remedy not only on individuals but even on masses of people. If you think that the whole of the problem is economic look about the world and see. A few months ago I was travelling in Siam. There is a country, if there ever was one, in which we may say that the people have no economic needs as a whole. And yet we find that the masses are not happy, nor indeed does justice and right prevail. There nearly every man has a little paddy field of rice, his own little plot of ground on which he raises all he needs to satisfy his family's needs. Every detail of Tolstoy's ideal is present. If mankind's problem is economic then it surely ought to be solved in Siam. What are the facts? The people are stagnant; they lack ambition and ideals, if nothing else. Have they ever done anything to help mankind? Have they ever given any contribution to the benefit of the world? They have been content to isolate themselves and become self-satisfied, and indifferent to others. Surely it is obvious that the economic solution has not proved satisfactory in this country. Can we then depend on it?

We are told by another group that if men will only live up to a code of moral standards, all will be right. We can all testify to the degrading influence of immorality and vice in society. We know into what terrible conditions it plunges men. And yet will looking up to a high moral plane give us the complete solution? Let us look at China for our answer. Probably no other country can boast of a higher civilization; when our ancestors were dwelling in caves and were illiterate the Chinese were going about in silk clothes and had a highly developed civilization and culture as well as learning. In all these thousands of years they have been under the training of a strict and high moral code. What is the result? They cannot trust each other. Public officials in China have to a large extent been selling out the rights of their positions for personal gain until the people can hardly find a man upon whom they can put their trust, and if they do find him he dare not be scrupulously honest. And further, the masses of China's population remain illiterate—four hundred million people, of whom mostly all are unable to sign their own name.

A certain friend of mine in China used to go up and down the country trying to bring home to his fellow-countrymen China's deplorable state in this matter. He had a certain unique system of tapes and charts, adjusted with a spring to show the relative illiteracy of the different countries. One day when he was showing these before some prominent men in a large city one of the group, with tears in his eyes, asked him not to show the last one, representing China's disproportionate illiteracy; he was so ashamed of what China had accomplished in all these centuries. And yet China has had one of the oldest and best codes of morals. It is obvious then that the solution does not lie in a code of morality however high or worthy it may be.

The next man may say that the trouble is not economic, nor moral, it is intellectual; the trouble, we are told, is that people like the Siamese and Chinese need education in scientific methods, education that will make them both useful and reliable. Have we not heard it urged against this very system of education, that it only makes rogues more clever? But what about the remedy when applied to nations? I will point out to you a people where this remedy has not worked—the Empire of Japan. Can you show me a nation that has shown a greater passion for this education, or has achieved a more remarkable record in this line than Japan? I saw in Tokyo a line of book-shops a mile long, where penniless students, too poor to go to higher schools, were waiting chances to snatch up a book, as if to purchase it, in order to read it between customers. The Japanese are literally mad for education. And yet they are among the sickest and saddest people on earth. There is a large waterfall in Japan around which the authorities have had to build a wall to keep the students from drowning themselves. A nation may develop the highest and most elaborate system of education, and yet fail to find the remedy for sickness of heart.

If you ask me then, what is my diagnosis of the problem, what remedy I personally believe will meet the situation, I answer what I so deeply and earnestly believe, that without the saving knowledge and power of Jesus Christ you will not find the problem solved. I believe in the economic and moral and intellectual factors as indispensable, but I believe that history and personal experience show that He is the only solution after all. Unless we have a Power that is outside of us, that by example as well as precept will inspire us

enough to lift us out of our bonds and weakness, we shall never meet the problem victoriously.

What does Jesus Christ do for us? First of all, He reveals to us the real nature of evil as it is. Then He overcomes our weakness, sets us free by the power of His Presence and by the gift of the Holy Spirit whom He sends to dwell in our hearts to teach, purify, strengthen and lead us in the path we should walk.

I come from a Christian nation. But alas, it is not Christian at heart. And yet whatever is good and true and helpful in it, is due to Christianity. All I can say to-day about the sources of that Power I will sum up in two points.

First, it reveals to everyone Jesus who is the ideal of a pure, friendly, serving man. He taught and inspired the ideal of brotherhood where men of every race are united in one body, into a great family of God. Moreover He gives the power to begin a new life of fellowship with God. And second, because I believe He opens to every man a new motive that is at once moral and spiritual, and that will furnish him with the energy to overcome the evils which beset him.

We have tried every remedy we ever knew. There was a time not so long ago, when evolution was supposed to furnish a perfection that was to be attained through life's processes. But that is all gone now. We have seen that man in his natural evolutions reverts to all forms of evil. History teaches this over and over again. First, heroism and high ideals; then the bitterest hatred and shameless selfishness. What we need is to have our hearts opened to God. There is no wish deeper in my heart, men, than that everyone of you before me to-day may be given the vision of that Life which was poured out unto death for us all and from its inspiration be prepared to meet the world's needs and sufferings.